

**Chief of Naval Operations
Adm. Jonathan Greenert**

Gerald R. Ford Christening

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Admiral Greenert: Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests and friends. Welcome, good day. And [inaudible] thank you again for being our sponsor.

It is a great day and we've been talking about that. It's the culmination of years of hard work and vision. We talked about that. The design effort for this great machine started nearly 20 years ago. Her keel was made in November of 2009. She is, as Shawn said and others have mentioned, the centerpiece of America's power projection capability and the carrier is the centerpiece of sea power.

Now Ford will herald in a new era of the carrier fleet. She is truly a technological marvel. But what does her future portend? Let's look at that for a minute as we have a little bit earlier this morning. The carrier has been really and is our most adaptive platform in the Navy.

The Enterprise. She was integral, she was powerful for five decades. Twenty-five deployments. She first deployed in 1962 in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. She last deployed about a year ago, 2012, where she supported Operation Enduring Freedom. She was at the end of the spear. She had evolving payloads and she remained relevant for over 50 years.

Now the Ford moves forward to carry on this proud and very powerful legacy. She will carry unmanned aircraft, Joint Strike Fighters, and she will deploy [lasers]. This platform will adapt to the security needs, whatever they may be, throughout her life. She will operate at the tip of the spear because, like the rest of your Navy, she will operate forward and be where it matters, and she will be ready when it matters.

But let's remember what makes this carrier and what makes your Navy great. It's the Navy civilians who designed the carrier for [inaudible] the 21st Century, her life. It's the shipyard workers, we mentioned earlier, who built the fine ship that she will be. And it's the sailors who will man her. And perhaps more importantly, the families who will support their sailors who will sail and pass in harm's way.

This is the 40th Anniversary of the all-volunteer force. It's our sailors who will man this great machine and man all of our ships around the world that are our asymmetric advantage. Technology is wonderful, it's terrific. We should embrace it. But it's our people that underpin our success. Our industrial base, our builders, our sailors, and their families.

So sailors will ensure the Ford adapts to future challenges. The role will change; the air wings and the aircraft she will deploy will evolve; the payloads will evolve; but it will be the innovative, dedicated sailors that will remain constant. The products of you out there and out

across America, that will join something bigger than themselves and make the Ford adaptable and relevant clearly well into the century.

It is my privilege and honor to introduce our keynote speaker. Ladies and gentlemen, I can't tell you how much more fun it is to be on the same side of the microphone as Senator Carl Levin.

The late President Ford, also hailed from Michigan and he was very instrumental in the Navy for this great ship. Frankly, he cosponsored the legislation. He's one of the nation's most respected leaders on national security, responsible for shaping the national security as the Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman. He's been doing this since 2007. He's been a staunch advocate for our military and their families. The Levins have taken care of our families. He's committed to the [inaudible]. He is a judicious steward of taxpayer money and he has led oversight efforts in that regard, establishing new cost controls in the 2009 Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act. He understands the need for more capability sooner, but at proper cost and [inaudible] lower cost.

So ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a warm welcome. It's my pleasure to introduce the Honorable Senator Carl Levin.

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